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# GREEK THE LANGUAGE OF CHRIST



A SHORT PROOF THAT GREEK  
WAS THE  
LANGUAGE OF CHRIST

BY  
PROFESSOR ROBERTS, D.D.  
ST. ANDREWS



ALEXANDER GARDNER  
Publisher to Her Majesty the Queen  
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1893





## PREFATORY NOTE.

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It has been suggested to me that many, who are not likely ever to meet with my large work on the Language habitually spoken by Christ, might welcome a little treatise like the present. I here confine myself to a single argument. That argument I believe to be of itself conclusive. If I am wrong in holding such a belief, my error will, doubtless, soon be demonstrated by the critics.

Prefixed to the argument, I have in Chapter I. given a brief history of the question, so far as I am personally concerned.

A. R.

UNIVERSITY, ST. ANDREWS,

April 20, 1893.

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Greek was the Language of Christ.

# GREEK THE LANGUAGE OF CHRIST.



## CHAPTER I.

### SKETCH OF THE HISTORY OF THE QUESTION AS RESPECTS THE PRESENT WRITER.

IT has been usual to regard the Greek Gospels as containing mere *translations* of the words of Christ. He is supposed to have really spoken some Hebrew dialect, of which no very definite description can be given. Some have called it Syriac,

others Syro-Chaldaic, and others Aramaic. But, as is pretty widely known, I have laboured for many years to show that all such views are mistaken, and have endeavoured in numerous writings to prove that Greek was, in reality, the language used by Christ throughout the whole course of His public ministry.

To that opinion I still firmly adhere, and even yet, notwithstanding all the opposition I have met with, I am sanguine enough to hope that I may win over to my side not a few of the readers of this little work, and that by means of a very simple argument. Before, however, proceeding to state that argument, I de-

sire to give a brief sketch of the history of this question, so far as I am personally concerned.

My first publication on the subject dates so far back as 1859. It was entitled—"Inquiry into the Original Language of St. Matthew's Gospel ; with relative discussions on the Language of Palestine in the time of Christ, and on the Origin of the Gospels." This work contained the germ of the whole argument which I developed in subsequent publications. In it I took up the position which I have ever since maintained, that Greek was the language made use of by Christ

in all His public intercourse with His disciples and others. I remember well the struggle it cost me to work round to this belief from the opinion which was then held by all the highest Biblical authorities. But the evidence appeared to me decisive. And, in looking now at this production of more than thirty years ago, I feel that, while it bears in it too clearly the marks of youthful indiscretion, the proofs which I brought forward of the prevalence of Greek in Palestine at the period in question were even then conclusive. The work, however, attracted very little attention, and, though kindly spoken of by some able writers, such as



Dean Mansel and Isaac Taylor, was, in general, treated with contempt.

Pursuing my researches, I next published in 1862 the first edition of my "Discussions on the Gospels." Many additional arguments were presented in this work to show that Greek was the habitual language of Christ. And it certainly fared much better than its predecessor. It brought me valuable recognition and encouragement from various quarters. But, as was to be expected in the case of a book running counter to views so long entertained, prejudice (as I could not but regard it) still proved, in most cases, superior to argument.

Now, however, two notable events occurred in my experience. The first was the appearance of a long and laudatory notice of my work in the *Saturday Review* (Nov. 29, 1862). In the judgment of the learned writer of that article, I had fully succeeded in proving my point. "The result," he said, "at which Mr. Roberts arrives is that 'Christ spoke for the most part in Greek, and only now and then in Aramaic,' and he establishes this conclusion by an amount of evidence which can hardly leave a doubt in the minds of unprejudiced readers." I may add that another of my reviewers spoke of the question I had discussed as being

absolutely “settled,” and henceforth to be reckoned among those subjects which John Foster used to describe as “laid on the shelf,”—admitting of no further controversy or hesitation. But alas! I have found the fact far otherwise. I had at that time, after all, only made—

“that foot-print upon sand  
Which old-recurring waves of prejudice  
Re-smooth to nothing”—

and, after the lapse of an entire generation, I still feel it necessary to do battle for what, as some said, was so long ago shown to be the truth.

The other event to which I have referred, was the receipt of a most kind,

and indeed, far too flattering letter from the celebrated Lord Lytton on the subject of my book. I have often been urged by friends to publish this letter; but for reasons which will easily be understood, have hitherto refrained. In now at length yielding to their advice, I am influenced by more than one consideration. I wish, ere finishing my term of active service on the field of literature, to put on record my strong obligations to Lord Lytton for his generous appreciation of the work of one who was to him an absolute stranger; and I desire also, through means of this letter, to furnish a practical reply to those writers who still deem my argument

worthy only of ridicule or neglect. The letter was as follows :—

Knebworth, Stevenage,  
Jan. 22, 1864.

DEAR SIR,

I am fairly in your book at p. 109, and I cannot read farther without conveying to you my thanks for sending it to me, and my cordial, and I may say enthusiastic admiration, of what appears to me one of the ablest masterpieces of critical controversy which our age has produced.

I cannot pretend to speak as a Biblical scholar, but one of the great merits of the work seems to me that, merely assuming the authorities given to be fairly

cited, the main argument is so clearly stated, and so logically enforced, that I am not sure that a Biblical scholar will be a better judge of its value than any other educated reader. The fine temper, the candour, and the dignity of mildness which you exhibit towards those who take different views, appear to me the perfection of controversy on subjects so sacred.

You cannot over-rate the interest of the question on which you display such masterly power of reasoning. I can conceive no question, indeed, appertaining to the department of high criticism, more interesting than the consideration—What was the language in which words that have changed the face of the civilized universe were uttered—How near do we approach to the *ipsissima verba* in which

the sermon on the Mount was delivered? And to my mind, our reverence for the Gospels, and even the respect with which a Deist of fine understanding would view them, are increased by all that tends to render it probable that we are not reading that paraphrase which words rendered into another language from that in which they were spoken can scarcely fail to be, but viewing the mind that spake in the language it employed.

Allow me to add that, before I began your book, I was one among the many who took it for granted that our Lord spoke the vernacular Hebrew or Aramaic of the time, and that I had therefore a prejudgment against your proposition, which has kept my attention to its development more alive.

I cannot, of course, yet say whether, on

concluding the book, you will have gained me to your side, or dispelled all the doubts that now suggest themselves to me. But sure I am that no future writer on this subject, of an intellect worthy to treat it, whether with you or against you, can fail to refer to your work with profound respect. Comfort yourself if it be slow to make its way. I am persuaded that it is among the books of our time which will last, and influence the minds of those who come after us.

Perhaps the German critics will be the first to appreciate its value, and to make that value more conceded by English critics.

I repeat my thanks for one of the highest delights I know of in this world, viz:—the first introduction to a great



intellect, duly disciplined and nobly employed.

Yours, my dear sir,

With all truth and respect,

E. B. LYTTON.

I do not, of course, here enter on any lengthened or comprehensive discussion of the question which the above letter describes as so full of interest. That I have done elsewhere, and those who are attracted to its consideration will find it set forth in all its bearings in my large work entitled, "*Greek the Language of Christ and his Apostles.*" As has been already suggested, all that I intend at present is to touch upon *one* argument,

which appears to me of itself conclusive. And all that I request for it is the calm, unbiassed consideration of those who may honour me with the perusal of this little work.

## CHAPTER II.

## A PEOPLE'S BIBLE CIRCULATED IN PALESTINE IN THE TIME OF CHRIST.

EVERY reader of the Gospels must have noticed how frequently and how freely our Lord appeals to "the Scriptures," or "the Writings,"—*γραφαί*—in addressing even the humblest of the people. Thus at St. Mark xii. 35-37, we read, "And Jesus answered and said while He taught in the temple, How say the scribes that Christ is the son of David? For David himself said by the Holy Ghost, The Lord said

to my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool. David therefore himself calleth him Lord; and whence is He then his Son? And the common people heard him gladly.” Here we find the people at large—ὁ πᾶν ὄχλος—spoken of as quite easily understanding and following Christ, when He quoted and commented on a passage from the Old Testament.

Again, at St. Luke xxiv., 27, we find it stated that Christ, in speaking to two of His disciples, “expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.” Here, the expression “in *all* the Scriptures” is especially noticeable, imply-

ing, as it does, that the disciples referred to had the whole of the sacred volume at their command. They were acquainted with no mere selections from the Old Testament, but could intelligently comprehend the evangelical teachings of their Master as He explained to them in the various inspired books—ἐν πάσαις ταῖς γραφαῖς—those things which had been written beforehand respecting Himself.

Moreover, His oft-repeated question, “Have ye not *read*?” takes for granted the same intimate acquaintance with the ancient Scriptures. Thus, to give only one example, we find at St. Matthew xii. 1-5, the following passage which evidently

implies familiarity with the Old Testament in a written form, on the part both of the disciples and the Pharisees, “At that time Jesus went on the Sabbath Day through the corn; and his disciples were an hungred, and began to pluck the ears of corn, and to eat. But when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto Him, Behold Thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the Sabbath Day. But He said unto them, Have ye not read—*Οὐκ ἀνέγνωτε*;—what David did, when he was an hungred, and they that were with him; how he entered into the house of God, and did eat the shewbread, which was not lawful for him to eat, neither for

them which were with him, but only for the priests? Or have ye not read in the law, how that on the Sabbath Days the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath, and are blameless?"

And now let us look at the matter in a somewhat different light. The people, for their part, were quite able and ready, when occasion arose, to quote from the ancient Scriptures. Thus at St. Luke xx., 27, 28, we read, "Then came to Him certain of the Sadducees, which deny that there is any resurrection; and they asked Him saying, Master, Moses *wrote* unto us, If any man's brother die, having a wife, and he die without children, that his

brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother.” Again, at St. John ii., 17, we are told respecting the disciples of Christ, that they “remembered that it was *written*, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up.” Once more, we find the common people—ὁ ὄχλος—with the greatest ease and naturalness, introducing into their discourse a quotation from the Old Testament at St. John vi., 31. The context is as follows,—“When the people therefore saw that Jesus was not there, neither His disciples, they also took shipping, and came to Capernaum, seeking for Jesus. And when they had found Him on the other side of the sea,



they said unto Him, Rabbi, when camest thou hither? Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled. Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of Man shall give unto you: for Him hath God the Father sealed. Then said they unto Him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent. They said therefore unto Him, what sign shewest thou then,

that we may see, and believe thee? What dost thou work? Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; *as it is written*, He gave them bread from heaven to eat."

Now, it is surely a clear and necessary inference from the above and other similar passages, that, at the period in question, the Old Testament Scriptures, as a whole, were well known to the nation of the Jews. These manifestly circulated among them in some *written* form with which they were quite familiar. The sacred writings were obviously not in the hands exclusively of any sacerdotal or literary caste. They were spread everywhere

throughout the land, and could be appealed to by any public teacher in addressing all sorts of hearers, with the assurance that they would at once be appreciated and understood.

No reader, I believe, will hesitate for a moment as to this conclusion. Universally it will be granted, on the ground of what has been said above, that the entire Scriptures of the Old Testament were then well known in Palestine. Every Jew had access to them in a written form; could quote from them as occasion required; and easily understood any references which were made to them in his hearing. So much results, as a matter

of course, from a simple perusal of the Gospels.

*What, then, was the written form in which the Old Testament then circulated among the Jews?*

## CHAPTER III.

THE HEBREW ORIGINAL WAS NOT THE  
PEOPLE'S BIBLE IN THE TIME OF  
CHRIST.

It may surprise some readers, who have not given much attention to the subject, to be told that the nation of the Jews in the days of Christ certainly did not read the sacred writings in the ancient Hebrew language. But that the case was so stands beyond all doubt. Nothing is more harmoniously agreed upon by Biblical scholars at the present day, than

that ancient Hebrew was then a dead language, so far as the people at large were concerned. It continued to be studied by experts as the tongue in which the Old Testament books had been composed, but beyond the circle of such scholars it was neither understood nor spoken. What is called "Hebrew" in the New Testament (Acts xxi. 40, xxii., 2, etc.,) was a totally different dialect. It seems to have been a kind of *patois*, formed from a mixture of Chaldee and Syriac, with perhaps some other elements. This sort of vernacular speech, which existed side by side with the Greek language, has never been better described

than by the learned Father Simon to the following effect:—"It is certain that the language which is called Hebrew in the New Testament is not properly either Hebrew, or Syriac, or even Chaldaic, but consists of a certain mixture of Hebrew and Chaldee or Babylonian."\* And it is to be noted that the familiar use of this impure Hebrew dialect left the people at large utterly helpless when they were

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\* *Hist. Crit. d. Text du Nouv. Test.* p. 65. The kind of Hebrew dialect which existed alongside of the Greek in the time of Christ, and from which He sometimes borrowed a word or two, was certainly not pure Aramaic. This is clearly shown by the manner in which such so-called Hebrew expressions are transliterated into Greek.

confronted with the true Hebrew of the Old Testament.

Let it be observed, then, that the "people's Bible" in the time of Christ could not possibly have been found in the original Hebrew text, for that was then to the nation generally a dead letter. Opinions differ among scholars as to the exact date at which ancient Hebrew ceased to be the common language of the Jews. But those who are best entitled to speak with authority on the subject declare with almost one voice, that, for a century at least before our era, Biblical Hebrew had ceased to be used in writing, as it had previously ceased to



be used in speech ; and that, though it continued, as I have said, to be studied by professed adepts as the language of the sacred books, it was, in the time of Christ, totally unknown to the great body of the Jewish people.

Those readers who have not hitherto had their attention specially turned to this question will naturally desire to have set before them the opinions of some scholars whom all regard as supreme authorities on such a point. And it may be well therefore, here to bring forward a few decisive statements from Hebraists of the first rank, especially since there is a strong tendency frequently evinced by

mere popular writers on Scripture, and even by some who should know better, to suggest that the Jews of our Lord's day did understand the ancient Hebrew,\* and that, accordingly, it was through that medium they became acquainted with the books of the Old Testament. I trust, then, that the following quotations from works of writers of the highest standing will be sufficient to guard every reader from accepting such an erroneous opinion.

Ewald, one of the greatest of modern

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\* I may refer *e.g.*, to a learned writer in the *Church Quarterly Review* (April, 1887, p. 160), who in opposing my views, maintains that the ancient Hebrew was then "universally known among the people!"

Hebrew scholars, declares that “the Hebrew in the last centuries before Christ became more and more an antique language, and was acquired only by special study.”

De Wette writes :—“After the exile, the Hebrew language gradually ceased to be heard from the lips of the people, and continued to survive only as the language of learning and literature.”

And Bleek, referring to the times of Christ, remarks—“The ancient Hebrew had already for a long time been, even to the Jews of Palestine, a dead language, the knowledge of which, so far as it was necessary for the reading of the Holy

Scriptures, continued only among those who were devoted to such a special study."

Quotations to the same effect might be indefinitely multiplied from other eminent scholars. But that appears needless, and I shall merely add that views identical with the above have been expressed by Winer, Gesenius, Deutsch, and almost every writer who has a claim to be heard upon the subject.

In support of the conclusion which has been stated, I may refer to an illustration which will be intelligible to all. Josephus, the well-known Jewish historian, was distinguished for his learning above most of

his contemporaries. He says that this was generally admitted. "Those of my own nation," he tells us (*Antiq.*, xx., 11, 2), "willingly acknowledge that I far surpass them in the learning belonging to the Jews." This, then, is the very man of all others likely to be well acquainted with the ancient Hebrew, if that were at all generally known among the Jews. Yet, it is certain that Josephus had but a slender acquaintance with the language. He depends more in his writings on the Greek translation of the Old Testament than on the original text, and his etymological and other blunders are of the grossest conceivable character. Referring

both to him and Philo, Renan remarks :—  
“The explanations which they give of certain Hebrew words surpass the strangest hallucinations of the ancients on the field of etymology.” Here, then, we have a crucial case. If a scholar so distinguished among his contemporaries for Jewish learning as Josephus, is proved, after all, to have been very deficient in a knowledge of ancient Hebrew, there can be no hesitation in concluding that to the community at large those were sealed books which were written in that language.

Another consideration may be added to prove that the ancient Hebrew Scriptures

could not have constituted the “people’s Bible” in the time of Christ. Not one Jew in a hundred, to say the least, could have afforded to purchase a Hebrew copy even of the Law, far less of the entire Scriptures. Greek books, on the other hand, as we know from abundant evidence, were produced at a very low rate, and might easily be procured by almost the poorest of the people.

Some pertinent statements on this point occur in Dr. Edersheim’s *Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*. He remarks (Vol. i., 23, 24):—“From the extreme labour and care bestowed on them, Hebrew manuscripts of the Bible were enormously dear,

as we infer from a curious Talmudical notice, where a common woollen wrap, which, of course, was very cheap, a copy of the Psalms, of Job, and torn pieces from Proverbs, are together valued at five *minahs*, say, about £19. Although this notice dates from the third or fourth century, it is not likely that the cost of Hebrew Biblical MSS. was much lower at the time of Jesus. This would, of course, put their possession well-nigh out of common reach. On the other hand, we are able to form an idea of the cheapness of Greek manuscripts from what we know of the price of books in Rome at the beginning of our era. Hundreds of slaves



were there engaged copying what one dictated. The result was not only the publication of as large editions as in our days, but their production at only about double the cost of what are now known as 'cheap' or 'people's editions.' Probably it would be safe to compute that as much matter as would cover sixteen pages of small print might, in such cases, be sold at the rate of about sixpence, and in that ratio. Accordingly, manuscripts in Greek or Latin, although often incorrect, must have been easily attainable, and this would have considerable influence in making the Greek version of the Old Testament the 'people's Bible.'"

I am anxious that the ground should be thoroughly cleared thus far before another step is taken. And if any reader has hitherto been resting in the belief that the Bible circulating among the Jews of Christ's day was the Hebrew text, I trust he will carefully weigh the considerations which have been stated. Let him reflect that the ancient Hebrew had long been a dead language to the Jewish people in general. It was acquired, as we have seen, only by study, and was known to few but professional experts. There is really nothing about which scholars at the present day are more unanimous than

this. They testify that Biblical Hebrew was then as unintelligible to an ordinary Jew as German is at the present day to an Englishman who has never studied that language. Let the reader also consider that the cost of a Hebrew roll of the entire Old Testament was such as to place its possession utterly beyond the reach of any except the wealthiest of the nation. Either of these facts is sufficient to negative the idea that, when our Lord referred His hearers, as He so often did, to the Scriptures, He could have meant the original Hebrew text. It will not, I hope, be deemed going too far if I say that this

is a point clearly and conclusively established.

*The Hebrew original was not the "People's Bible" in the time of Christ.*

## CHAPTER IV.

AN ARAMAIC VERSION OF THE HEBREW  
ORIGINAL WAS NOT THE PEOPLE'S  
BIBLE IN THE TIME OF CHRIST.

HERE it may at once be stated that there is no evidence of any such Version having ever existed. As we shall soon see, all the evidence worth considering points to the very opposite conclusion. Whether we listen to the old Rabbinical authorities, or examine the pages of Josephus, or refer to the writings of the early Christian

Fathers, or take into consideration the general facts of the case,—we are led to believe that the idea of an Aramaic translation of the Old Testament having ever been formed, and that this circulated in Palestine at the beginning of our era, is a mere chimera which owes its existence to nothing better than imagination.

As we have already seen, and as should be carefully noted, it is manifestly implied throughout the Gospels that the Jews of our Lord's time had access to the *entire* Scriptures of the Old Testament in a *written* form which was well understood. Did, then, I ask, such a version exist in Aramaic? Some seem to think that it is

sufficient to answer that this *must* have been the case. They assume certain points as to the linguistic condition of Palestine at the time, and then they affirm a hypothesis as to the Bible in use among its inhabitants. But nothing could be more unscientific than such a mode of dealing with the subject. And the day has gone by when mere assertions of the kind referred to carry weight in any department of knowledge. The demand of our time is that a supreme deference should be paid to *facts*. All theories, however plausible, and all traditions, however venerable, must be set aside, if found to be unsupported by substantial and suffi-

cient evidence. Truth, at all hazards, is what mankind most passionately desire. And, in pursuit of this noble aim, many views which formerly prevailed have become modified, while some have been altogether abandoned. Proofs, facts, incontrovertible arguments, are now called for ; and, as we shall immediately see, are with reference to the hypothesis now before us, lamentably deficient. Will the reader, then, believe that, while what is required is evidence that an *entire* Aramaic version of the Old Testament existed in the time of Christ, all that is forthcoming is some slight reference to a Targum (translation with explanation) of



the Book of Job? And even that, if it existed, could not lawfully be used. As we shall see from a passage to be immediately quoted, it was held in such detestation by a leading authority among the Jews, that he caused it to be buried in the earth! And, if such were the feelings of the time with respect to written Aramaic versions of any portion of Scripture, we may safely conclude that no translation of the entire Old Testament in that language could then have been in general circulation. It is stated, indeed, as will be seen, that *written* Targumim of Scripture were strictly interdicted.

Let us hear, then, what Emmanuel

Deutsch, the late celebrated Talmudical scholar, has to say upon the subject. Referring to the fact that Hebrew had become a dead language to the Jews at large, he remarks:—"If the common people thus gradually had lost all knowledge of the tongue in which were written the books to be read to them, it naturally followed (in order 'that they might understand them') that recourse must be had to a translation into the idiom with which they were familiar—the Aramaic. That further, since a bare translation could not in all cases suffice, it was necessary to add to the translation an explanation, more particularly of the more

difficult and obscure passages. Both translation and explanation were designated by the term *Targum*. In the course of time there sprang up a guild, whose special office it was to act as *interpreters* in both senses (*Meturgeman*), while formerly the learned alone volunteered their services. These interpreters were subjected to certain bonds and regulations as to the form and substance of their renderings. Thus ‘neither the reader nor the interpreter are to raise their voices above the other;’ they have to wait for each other until each have finished his verse;’ ‘the Meturgeman is not to lean against a pillar or a beam, but to stand with fear

and with reverence ;' *he is not to use a written Targum*, but he is to deliver his translations *viva voce* lest it might appear that he was reading out of the Torah itself," etc. . . . The fear of the adulterations and mutilations which the Divine Word—amid the troubles within and without the Commonwealth—must undergo at the hands of incompetent or impious exponents broke through the rule that the Targum should only be *oral*, lest it might acquire undue authority. Thus, if a Targum of Job is mentioned as having been highly disapproved by Gamaliel the elder (middle of first century, A.D.), who caused it to be hidden and

buried out of sight, we find, on the other hand, at the end of the second century the practice of reading the Targum generally commended, and somewhat later Jehoshua ben Levi enjoins it as a special duty upon his sons. The Mishnah even contains regulations about the manner in which the Targum is to be written.”\*

This passage has been gravely adduced† to prove, on the authority of Mr. Deutsch, that a written Aramaic translation of the entire Old Testament cir-

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\* Deutsch's *Literary Remains*, p. 324, ff.

† *The Expositor*, First Series, Vol. VII., p. 384.

culated in the time of Christ among the Jews of Palestine. If it does not prove *that*, its citation is wholly irrelevant to the point before us. The question is, what were those *γραφαί* to which our Lord so often appealed, and which He took for granted were in the possession of His hearers? It is obvious that the *Scriptures* referred to denoted the whole Old Testament, in one form or another, so that, if the above extract from Mr. Deutsch does not imply that a written Aramaic version of the entire Old Testament existed in the time of Christ, it completely fails in effecting the purpose for which it is produced.

Now, the reader has only to let his eye fall upon the passage to see that it does not mean, and was never intended by its author to mean, what has been so strangely inferred from it. Mr. Deutsch italicises the injunction that, at the period with which alone we are concerned, the Meturgeman was “not to use a *written* Targum,” and tells us that, even so late as the middle of the first century A.D., Gamaliel regarded a written translation of the book of Job as an utter abomination. It is needless to say that, if this were so, the supposition that the entire Old Testament circulated in the days of Christ in

an Aramaic version, contains its own refutation.

And yet the passage above quoted has been thought to prove against me that there was an Aramaic version of the Old Testament current among the Jews of Palestine in the days of Christ. The able and learned writer already referred to has brought it forward with an air of triumph, and then said,—“If Dr. Roberts wishes to continue this controversy, it would be instructive to know what are his views on this matter.”\* Well, my views have just been stated.

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\* Dr. Sanday in *The Expositor*, *ut sup.*, p. 386.



They are to the effect, that the statements made by Mr. Deutsch, instead of confirming the belief that an Aramaic version of the Old Testament then circulated in Palestine, clearly show the very opposite. According to him, as well as other competent scholars,\* an oral interpretation was alone as yet sanctioned; so that we conclude, with certainty, that Christ must have referred to the Old Testament books in some other form than Aramaic, when he appealed, as He so often did, to the sacred Scriptures.

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\* So, e.g., Vitranga, *De Synagoga Vetere*, p. 1019.

Turning now to the Jewish historian Josephus, we find that he is totally silent respecting any Aramaic version. As is well known, he gives an account (*Antiq.* xii., 2, 1, ff.) of the rise of the *Greek* version of the Pentateuch; and he very frequently makes use of the Septuagint in his writings. But none of his works contain the slightest allusion to a translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into Aramaic, nor does he appear to have made any use of such a version. Had it, then, any existence in his day?

Again, not one of the Christian Fathers furnishes the slightest proof of the exis-

tence of such a work. As will appear in the following chapter, it is to the Septuagint only that they refer, as being in constant use among the Jews. Some of the Fathers, we know, were very diligent in examining into the history of the ancient Scriptures, and they were not likely to have overlooked the fact that these had been translated into Aramaic, if such had, in reality, been the case. Yet even Origen, who understood Hebrew, and who was unwearied in Biblical researches, says not a word upon the subject.

Moreover, as I beg to remind the

reader, we found that the price of a Hebrew copy of the ancient Scriptures was so high as to be absolutely prohibitory, except in the case of a very few individuals. Now, the same thing would as a matter of course, have been true regarding a complete copy of an Aramaic version, supposing such a version to have ever existed. How then could such a wide-spread and intimate familiarity with the Old Testament have been acquired as is implied in almost every chapter of the Gospels?

Finally, it appears somewhat remarkable that hardly anything which can

possibly be deemed a vestige of the imagined version, has descended to our day. We still possess the Samaritan Pentateuch in a complete form. It can be traced, from an early period, through references which are made to it, both in the Talmud and in the Fathers. In like manner, had an Aramaic version of the Old Testament existed among the Jews at the commencement of our era, it too would surely have been traceable, in whole or in part, down to the present day. But not a relic or reminiscence of it has been preserved; while, as has just been remarked, not a single reference to it is to be found in the remains of patristic antiquity.

No evidence, then, is forthcoming that a written Aramaic translation of the Hebrew Scriptures existed among the Jews in the days of Christ. It is not, therefore, a mere "subjective opinion" \* of mine which is put forward, when I remark that the language addressed by our Lord to His contemporaries—ἐρευνᾶτε τὰς γραφάς—whether the imperative or indicative rendering of the words be accepted, could not have referred to such a version. Hard words have, no doubt been used regarding me, for thus refusing to believe that the Bible of Christ and those

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\* It has been so called by Dr. Sanday, *ut sup.*, p. 383.

around Him was an Aramaic translation of the Old Testament. But let the blame still be borne, if it is thought to be still deserved. I must repeat that no such version ever had an existence. Fancy may invent it, but facts testify against it; and therefore I maintain that our Lord had in view some other form in which the sacred books of the Jews then really circulated among them, when He referred His hearers, as He so often did, to the Holy Scriptures.

*An Aramaic Version of the Old Testament was not the "People's Bible" in the time of Christ.*

## CHAPTER V.

THE GREEK VERSION OF THE OLD TESTAMENT WAS THE PEOPLE'S BIBLE IN THE TIME OF CHRIST.

THE actual Hebrew Bible, and the imaginary Aramaic Version, being both set aside, as neither having constituted the popular Bible of Palestine in the time of Christ—what remains? Simply, that the Greek Version of the Old Testament *must* have been the Bible of which we are in quest. By a process of exhaustion we are



led to this conclusion. No rival now remains upon the field; and we soon perceive that the result which has been reached fits in with all the existing facts of the case.

Here, indeed, we do, at last, feel ourselves on solid ground. It is known, beyond all doubt, that a Greek version of the ancient Scriptures did exist in our Saviour's day. Although much that is fabulous may have been mixed up with the account given under the name of Aristeas, and repeated by others, of the formation of the Septuagint version, certain points are admitted by all scholars as undoubtedly historical. Among these

are the following—that the translation was begun about 280 B.C.—that it was gradually completed in the course of the succeeding century—and that thus it had existed, in its entirety, for several generations before the coming of Christ.

And then, on opening the Greek New Testament, we find proof everywhere of the use and influence of this version. We see that the great majority of the Old Testament passages cited in the New, are expressed in the very words of the Septuagint, while others, though differing slightly, are manifestly derived from it. We also discover the most remarkable harmony between the general diction of

the New Testament and that of the Greek version. A strong *prima facie* impression is thus at once produced that the question we have been agitating has, at length, found its solution. But let us proceed to a fuller and closer examination of the whole facts of the case.

The number of passages quoted from the Old Testament in the New has been somewhat variously estimated by different writers. And the reason is obvious. There are a few cases in which it is difficult to say whether the words in question should be regarded as a direct citation, or merely a reference; and, according as they are viewed in the one

aspect or the other, will be the sum total of the quotations. We may perhaps say that altogether 275 passages are quoted from the Old Testament in the various books of the New Testament writers. If St. John vii. 38, vii. 42, and Eph. v. 14, be added, the whole number of citations will be brought up to 278.

Now, as I have said, in the vast majority of these quotations the Septuagint is either exactly followed, or the resemblance is so close as to be virtually identical. As an example of perfect agreement we may refer to Acts ii. 34, 35, or Acts iv. 25, 26, in both of which passages the New Testament corresponds,

word for word, with the Greek version. As an instance, again, of slight variation, we may turn to Rom. x. 5, or 1 Pet. ii. 9, and many similar passages. These, of course, all tell their own tale, as being directly and unquestionably derived from the Septuagint.

There are again, many degrees of variation from the text of the Seventy, where still there can be no doubt as to the source whence the words were taken. Sometimes nothing more than a faint reminiscence of the Greek version seems to have been present to the mind of the New Testament writer, while yet it is plain that he had it in view in his citation. We may

refer for an example to St. John xiii. 18, where the Hebrew exactly corresponds with the Greek translation, and it is evident that the Evangelist had the rendering of the latter in his mind, though he expressed its meaning otherwise in his quotation.

But further, there are passages which are quoted exactly from the Septuagint, where that version departs from the original Hebrew. An example is found at St. Matt., xiii. 14, where an *imperative* in the Hebrew is represented by a *future* both in the Seventy and the Gospel; and at Rom. xv. 12, where what is in the Hebrew—"which shall stand for an en-

sign of the people ; to it shall the Gentiles seek"—is represented both in the Greek version and in the Epistle by these words—"he that shall rise to rule over the Gentiles ; in him shall the Gentiles trust." In these and similar cases, the meaning expressed in the Greek may be implied in the Hebrew ; but, so far as the phraseology is concerned, the New Testament departs entirely from the original text, and adopts that of the version.

And, what is still more remarkable, there are some instances in which the quotation made in the New Testament depends utterly for its pertinency and force on words which are found in the

Greek version, but not at all in the original Hebrew. A very striking example occurs at Acts, xv. 16, 17. The Greek, as here quoted by the Apostle, is rendered as follows in the Revised Version—

“After these things I will return,  
And I will build again the tabernacle of David which  
is fallen ;  
And I will build again the ruins thereof,  
And I will set it up :  
That the residue of men may seek after the Lord,  
And all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called,  
Saith the Lord, who maketh these things known  
From the beginning of the world.”

The corresponding Hebrew of Amos, ix. 11, is thus given in the Revised Old Testament—“In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will



raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old ; that they may possess the remnant of Edom, and all the nations, which are called by my name, saith the Lord that doeth this." No one doubts that the Apostle's citation is from the Septuagint, though, as is often the case, there are slight variations. But the noteworthy point is, that the Greek version differs from the Hebrew in the very words on which the stress of the argument depends. St. James is pleading for the admission of Gentiles to the Christian Church, without requiring them to submit to the yoke of Jewish observances ; in other words, he is pleading for an ac-

knowledgment of the freedom and catholicity of the Gospel of Christ. Now, he does so, as was natural, by quoting a passage from the Old Testament, which implied that God had, from the first, intended that the new dispensation should be of this character. For this end nothing could be more apposite or effective than these words—"That the residue of men may seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles upon whom my name is called." But the Hebrew gives a totally different turn to the passage, and cannot be said even to *imply* the sense contained in the Acts. So much has this been felt, that many modern scholars hold that the

original text of Amos has here been wilfully corrupted by the Jews. Others think that the Seventy must have had a different Hebrew text before them from what at present exists. Be this as it may, there can be no doubt that the Apostle followed the reading of the Septuagint. He quoted from it as authoritative, in the hearing, not only of his fellow-apostles, but of the *multitude* (τὸ πλῆθος, ver. 12), and that, too, in the heart of the Holy City.

Besides this constant use of the Greek version by the New Testament writers in quoting from the Old, it deserves to be noticed how Septuagintal throughout is

the phraseology of the New Testament. This is strikingly apparent to anyone who looks through such a book as Grinfield's *Novum Testamentum, Editio Hellenistica*. There is hardly a verse but is found to possess a close linguistic affinity with the Septuagint. This is especially noticeable with respect to those great words which embody in themselves the root-ideas of Christianity. Many of these are scarcely to be found in classical writers with any approach to their Biblical meaning, but are seen to have been got ready for use in the pages of the Greek version. Let us turn, for example to the Epistle to the Romans. There we soon encounter the

verb *δικαιόω* (ii. 13; iii. 24; v. 1, etc.,) on which so much depends in the New Testament. Its classical sense is "to make right," or "to think fit"; but such is evidently not its import as employed by St. Paul. It means in his writings "to acquit" or "justify," or "free from guilt"; and it was prepared in the Septuagint for being so used (Exod. xxiii. 7; Psalm cxlii. 2, etc.) Again, what a flood of light is shed upon the Pauline phrase, *περὶ ἁμαρτίας*, as applied to Christ (Rom. viii. 3,) when we observe that that expression is constantly used in the Septuagint (Lev. v. 6; Num. vi. 11, etc.,) for "a sin-offering." And, leaving the region of

doctrine for that of ethics, we find such a word as *ταπεινός* (with its derivatives) absolutely unintelligible, unless it is looked at as employed by the Seventy. Where found in the classics, *ταπεινός* means only *low* in a local sense, or in a bad moral sense ; whereas in the Septuagint (Psalm xxxiii. 18 ; Prov. xi 2,) it denotes “humble” or “lowly,” and in this sense is applied (St. Matt. xi. 29,) by our Lord to Himself. The Septuagint usage of words is thus a most valuable guide to their real meaning as employed in the New Testament ; while a mere acquaintance with the same words, as occurring

in the classics, would prove dangerously misleading.

It being thus certain that the New Testament phraseology is throughout based upon the Septuagint, we are now warranted in even asking this question—Did the sacred writers *ever* quote directly from the Hebrew? Many have replied very positively that such was the case. They think that the comparatively few instances in which the New Testament writers depart, to any marked degree, from the existing text of the Greek version, and seem to have recourse to the Hebrew, are sufficient to prove the point. But let us consider. If any one of the human

authors of the New Testament might be expected to quote the Hebrew original, it would be the Apostle Paul. He had received a regular training under the famous Rabbi Gamaliel, and was, to use his own expression, a very "Hebrew of the Hebrews." Yet an able and diligent student of his writings in our own day expresses himself on the point before us as follows—"The whole number of quotations is about 87. . . . Of these nearly half show a precise verbal agreement with the Seventy; while of the remaining passages, at least two-thirds exhibit a degree of verbal similarity which can only be accounted for by an acquaint-



tance with the Septuagint. None of these passages *offer any certain proof that the Apostle was acquainted with the Hebrew original.* That he must have been acquainted with it can hardly be doubted; yet it seems improbable that he could have familiarly known it without straying into parallelisms with the Hebrew text in those passages in which it varies from the Seventy. On the other hand, the Apostle must have possessed a minute knowledge of the Septuagint, as is found by the fragmentary character of the quotations, no less than their verbal agreement.\*

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\* Jowett's *Epistles of St. Paul*, 1, 401.

I do not think it reasonable to doubt that, considering the special education which St. Paul had received, he must have acquired some knowledge of the ancient Hebrew. But the admission of this fact only accentuates more strongly the prevalence which then belonged to the Greek version in Palestine. For, as his writings clearly show, St. Paul, like Josephus, depended far more on that version for his quotations from the Old Testament, than he did on the Hebrew original. And if the case be so with respect even to him, far more ought we to hesitate before ascribing a knowledge of ancient Hebrew to any of the other

sacred writers. They all seem in fact to have belonged to the class of ἀγγραμματοὶ καὶ ἰδιῶται, as they were styled by their opponents (Acts iv. 13)—men who, while certainly possessed of a good general education, were destitute of that technical Jewish culture by which alone any knowledge of ancient Hebrew was likely to be acquired.

But we may be told that they sometimes correct the Greek version by turning to the original Hebrew, and that, therefore, they must have been acquainted with that language. We may *e.g.*, be referred to St. Matt. ii. 15, which contains a quotation from Hos. xi. 1, where the

Greek version reads τὰ τέκνα αὐτοῦ instead of τὸν υἱὸν μου, which is an exact rendering of the Hebrew. Now, there can be no doubt that the Seventy followed in this passage an erroneous text, and that St. Matthew gives a correct rendering of the true original. But that is very far from proving—against all probability, as we have seen—that the Evangelist himself possessed a knowledge of ancient Hebrew. Let us take an analogous case. Suppose a writer among ourselves is in the habit of quoting the authorized English version, but that he occasionally gives it in an amended form—that, surely would be no proof that he sometimes had

recourse, for himself, to the Hebrew or Greek original. There are well-known passages in which the Authorised Version is defective or incorrect; and these are quite familiar to mere English readers who have given attention to the subject. And so with the New Testament writers. There were, doubtless, many emendations on the Greek version current in Palestine. Those scholars whose duty it was to study the original, would suggest such improvements; and they would come to be known among the people, just as corrections of the common English translation circulate among ourselves. And thus we naturally account for the few cases in

which the sacred writers depart from the rendering of the Seventy, and give a Greek translation more correctly representing the original.

Many able scholars have, I humbly believe, gone far astray on this point. In direct opposition to the facts already established—such as the little acquaintance with ancient Hebrew shown by such scholars as St. Paul and Josephus—they have supposed that men like St. Peter and St. John, who were technically “unlearned and ignorant,” formed for themselves a translation from the original Hebrew. This is, in view of all the facts, incredible; but there is no difficulty in

conceiving that they took advantage at times of emendations on the current Greek version, which had been suggested by those who professionally studied the subject.

If we now glance at the evidence furnished by early Christian writers, we find that Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, and Tertullian all contain statements which clearly testify to the habitual use of the version of the Seventy among the Jews.\* The truth is, that, until the time of St. Jerome, none of the Fathers of the

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\* See those passages referred to, with other remarks bearing upon the subject, in *Greek the Language of Christ and his Apostles*, p. 140.

Church imagined that the Old Testament circulated generally among the Jews of the apostolic age in any other form than that of the Greek translation. Jerome allowed himself to make some very baseless and erroneous statements on the subject of the New Testament citations; and the groundlessness of these has been excellently exposed by several writers, such as Morinus, Hody, and Father Simon. There is a very thorough discussion of the views of Jerome in the third of the *Exercitationes Biblicae* of Morinus; and his inconsistencies are there set forth in the most telling and effective manner. But, indeed, his own pupils sometimes



showed him how untenable were his positions. It was, for instance, a favourite doctrine of his that the apostles never cited the Seventy, unless the version were in perfect concord with the Hebrew text. But his illustrious female disciple, Eustochium, one day staggered him by referring him to Rom. iii. 10-18, in which St. Paul quotes freely from the Greek version, without regarding the Hebrew at all. Upon this discovery, Jerome was deeply agitated, and expressed himself in the following pretty strong language—  
“Quod cum audissem, quasi a fortissimo pugile percussus essem, coepi tacitus aestuare, et stuporem mentis vultus pallore

signare : Hebraeus, inquam, ex Hebraeis, secundum legem Phariseus, eruditusque ad pedes Gamalielis, aut ignoravit haec, aut eorum qui lecturi erant abusus est ignorantia !” The worthy Father might have been saved all this painful excitement, if he had only, like others, admitted the simple and obvious fact, that the Septuagint was the Bible of St. Paul, as well as of the other writers of the New Testament, and of the Jewish people at large.

As was suggested in a former chapter, the money-value of a Hebrew copy of the sacred Scriptures might be said to

have been equal to a prince's ransom. Very few, therefore, could have had access to the "Writings," so often spoken of, in their Hebrew form. But, as I beg to repeat, the case was totally different with respect to Greek books. We have the amplest evidence that these circulated at very low prices throughout the vast Roman Empire. Multitudes of well-educated slaves or freed-men were constantly at work in producing them; and they sold at rates scarcely higher than those charged for cheap editions of popular works at the present day. There was nothing, therefore, to prevent a respectable Jewish family from

possessing a full Greek Bible in their home; and thus—thus only I believe—are we enabled to account for that intimate acquaintance with the sacred volume which the Gospels everywhere assume as existing among the Jews in our Saviour's day.

*The Greek version of the Old Testament was the "People's Bible" in the time of Christ.*

## CHAPTER VI.

## GREEK WAS THE LANGUAGE OF CHRIST.

HAS the reader felt the validity of my argument up to this point? Has it been proved to his satisfaction, first, that a "People's Bible" circulated in Palestine in the time of Christ; secondly, that the Hebrew original was not the "People's Bible"; thirdly, that neither did an Aramaic version constitute the popular Bible; and fourthly, that the Septuagint, a Greek translation of the Old Testament,

was the "People's Bible," which was in universal use among the Jews when Christ dwelt upon the earth?

In that case, the conclusion is inevitable and obvious. If it has been proved that the Greek version of the Seventy really constituted "the Scriptures" habitually quoted and referred to by Christ, the question is settled as to the language made use of in His public addresses to the people. *His* Bible and *their* Bible being Greek, there can remain no doubt that Greek—the singularly interesting and well-marked Hebraistic Greek of the country—was the language in which He conveyed to the men of His day His

divine instructions, and the language in which they naturally expected\* to be addressed.

The *interest* of the conclusion thus reached as to the language spoken by Christ is obvious, inasmuch as it implies that we still possess His teachings in the form in which they were originally uttered. Some devout Christians, under the influence of the opinion that our Lord spoke a Hebrew

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\* Such an expectation clearly existed in the case of the multitude assembled in Jerusalem (Acts xxii., 2,) though for special reasons, St. Paul then addressed them in the so-called Hebrew language. See *Greek the Language of Christ and His Apostles*, p. 469, ff.

dialect, have set themselves to the study of Syraic, in order that, by reading the Peschito version, they might approximate towards the language which He employed. But, happily, the actual facts of the case are far more satisfactory. The words of the Divine Man have not passed away, as if they had been "writ in water," if they were ever written at all, but they still lie before us in the existing Greek Gospels. And thus all have access to them, who will take the comparatively small trouble of mastering the simple Greek in which they have been forever enshrined.

Nor is the *importance* of the conclusion we have reached less evident than the



interest attaching to it. But for the proof of this, I must refer to my large work named in the first chapter. I shall only say here that one of my critics in the *Saturday Review* (Aug. 11, 1883,) has admitted that, if the view for which I contend be accepted, "a revolution must to a considerable extent, take place in the science of Biblical criticism." As will at once be obvious to every considerate reader, such questions as the Origin and Authenticity of the Gospels then present a totally different aspect from what they do on the hypothesis as to the language of Christ which has hitherto prevailed.

I may here be allowed to remark that many excellent writers, while resisting or ignoring my view of this question, have, nevertheless, expressed themselves in such a manner as tacitly implies its acceptance. They have refined on the special meanings of Greek words and tenses, for which there were certainly no exact Hebrew equivalents. If our Lord *really* made use of the expressions referred to, there may be some ground for such remarks; but, if He spoke in a Hebrew dialect, as these writers maintain, then the subtle distinctions which they draw out are utterly baseless. Archdeacon Farrar, for instance, affirms (*Life of Christ*, i. 90)—“The lang-

uage which our Lord commonly spoke was Aramaic ;” but a reviewer of his work, who, as was to be expected, agrees with him on that point, remarks (*Quarterly Review*, Jan. 1875, p. 181), that the author “is at times forgetful in drawing out delicate shades of meaning from our Lord’s words, that Greek was not the language in which He must ordinarily have expressed Himself.” I have given elsewhere illustrations of the same inconsistency from the learned writings of Bishop Ellicott and Archbishop Trench.\*

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\* See *Greek the Language of Christ and his Apostles*, p. 484, ff.

But, let me here bring forward what is perhaps a still more striking example of the way in which Archdeacon Farrar, while “one among the many” referred to in Lord Lytton’s letter, glides, with seeming unconsciousness, into acquiescence in my view as to the original language of the Sermon on the Mount. In his able volume entitled *Mercy and Judgment*, we find the following passage (p. 184),—

“Gehenna means a punishment which for Jews was normally, and all but invariably, terminable; terminable, indeed, by annihilation, if not by deliverance, for all but a very few of the very worst apostates, and possibly even for them.

Hell is taken to mean a punishment never terminable for any who enter it! How utterly unfit, then, is the word 'hell' to serve as a rendering for the word Gehenna!

"It is a translation which has become positively misleading, because it connotes a totally different order of conceptions in its most important particular, namely, the particular of its duration.

"And what makes the rendering more painfully unfortunate—I had almost said inexcusable—is, that our Lord and the Apostles have themselves set us an unmistakable example as to how the word should have been dealt with.

“ For Gehenna was a technical Hebrew religious term. It was a Hebrew term, and not a Greek term. And yet exactly because it was technical, and because no Greek term could serve as its precise equivalent, our Lord and the Apostles would not translate it into Greek, but they preserved it, as it was, in its precise technical meaning; as though He and they meant, in the most express manner, to prevent it from being mingled up with misleading conceptions which were alien from it.

“ We have suffered grievously, and I fear shall continue to suffer, by not following His divine example. It seems to me

a positive duty to transliterate from Hebrew into English the word which our Lord would not alter, and which He therefore transliterated from Hebrew into Greek."

Now, the whole force of this reasoning clearly depends on the supposition that the Sermon on the Mount was delivered in Greek. If Hebrew had been its language, there was no room for the transliteration of Gehenna by Christ. That Hebrew term simply came to be used by Him at the proper place in His discourse, as did the rest of the Hebrew by which it was surrounded. There may possibly be a great lesson for translators in the reten-

tion of Gehenna by Christ, without any attempt to represent it through means of an equivalent Greek expression. But then, in order to have any basis on which to rest such a lesson, we must, of necessity, believe that the discourse at large was delivered in the Greek language. I hold that it unquestionably was so. And I have elsewhere given what I regard as ample proof that such was the case.\*

If, then, (I may add) there is good reason to believe that Christ inaugurated His public ministry by the delivery of a

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\* *Greek the Language of Christ and His Apostles*, p. 145, ff.



long discourse in Greek, it follows, as a matter of course, that Greek was the language which, as a Teacher, He constantly employed. No doubt, He also made use of an occasional Hebraic expression, as the Gospels indicate in several passages. Nothing could have been more natural than that He should do so, just as in Scotland a public speaker may at times, with great effect, introduce into the English, which is the staple of his discourse, a word or two from the homely vernacular. But it is like trying to rest a pyramid on its apex, when any one quotes the comparatively few Aramaic expressions which occur in the Gospels, to

prove that Aramaic (in its debased form as before explained), and not Greek, was the usual language of Christ. The passages in question simply prove that our Lord had recourse to a Hebrew dialect *on these occasions*. They are never presented to us as specimens of His ordinary language, but, on the contrary, appear to be brought in as exceptions to His usual practice. And yet the occurrence of the few expressions referred to has recently been spoken of in the pages of an ably-conducted paper, as if they were the sole and sufficient reason for believing that Christ's habitual language was Aramaic. We thus read in the *Guardian* (Nov. 2,

1892),—"The ground which has convinced most scholars that Aramaic and not Greek was the language of our Lord, is that sayings of His in that language are occasionally quoted." But, as I have said, these Aramaic terms really come in as exceptions, and, when so viewed, they are easily explained. On the other hand, it seems impossible to give any rational account of their occurrence, if they are regarded as representing the language constantly spoken by our Lord Jesus Christ.

Let it be accepted, then, as an indubitable fact, that the Greek Gospels still

preserve to us the teaching of Christ in its original form ; and from how many difficulties is the Biblical student thus immediately set free ! No longer has he to search after a *Urevangelium*, or original Gospel, in the Aramaic language, which was, by and bye, no one can tell how, translated into Greek. No longer has he to construct elaborate and intricate schemes, accounting for the Origin of the Gospels, such as those of Eichhorn and Bishop Marsh, with the many others which have vainly followed them. The case is as simple as it is satisfactory. Christ habitually made use of Greek in His public teaching, and the Evangelists

reported in the same language those gracious and ever-living words which thus proceeded out of His mouth.

Here I conclude my present argument. I confidently rest the whole case on the one line of proof to which I have restricted myself in this little book. And if the reasoning which has been pursued cannot be invalidated, may I not humbly hope that the conclusion to which it leads will be admitted? I have, indeed, been told by the very able and friendly reviewer of my larger work in the *Spectator* (April 14, 1888) that “scholars are practically unanimous in holding that our Lord

spake for the most part in Hebrew (in the form, that is, of Aramaic), and only sometimes in Greek ; and, as a rule, they have hitherto turned a deaf ear to the arguments with which Professor Roberts impugns that position. It is probable that they will continue to do so, though he has in the volume before us pressed those arguments once more with fresh illustrations and supports. For, this position of theirs has become a commonplace in biblical literature. It is found in all commentaries on the New Testament, whether popular or critical, and is regarded by writers of all sorts as an unquestionable fact."

These are certainly very disheartening words. But I am unwilling to believe that the position described will be the final attitude of any fair-minded student with respect to the question at issue. Progress, to some extent, has already been made towards what I regard as the truth. No writer in this country would now echo the language of Renan when he said (in 1863, *Vie de Jésus*, p. 32) concerning Christ—*Il n' est pas probable qu'il ait su le grec*," or accept the statement recently made by Father Didon (in 1891, *Jésus Christ*, p. 84)—"*Il ne semble pas qu'il ait parlé le grec*." I have hope, therefore, that the truth will yet be ac-

cepted in all its fulness, if, as I humbly think, I have had the happiness of setting it forth. And then a new interest will be felt to belong to the Gospels as embodying the teachings of the Great Master in the language in which He Himself delivered them ; while a new solvent will be found for many of the difficulties which have perplexed Biblical students in connection with the theory which has hitherto prevailed as to the language of Christ.

FINIS.



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